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## **AMERICAN UNILATERALISM: A SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE TWO GULF WARS OF 1991 AND 2003**

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The word, 'Unilateralism' means going alone for doing certain thing or action in one's own way and in one's own interests. It may also means, doing something without seeking the support and cooperation of others, and in total disregards to others opinions and interest. In international politics, unilateralism stands for unilateral action conducted by a state in pursuit of its national interest regardless of outside support. It could also refers to a policy or practice of conducting foreign affairs with minimal consultation and cooperation with other nations, including a nation's allies. Unilateralism could also be defined as a belief that one country should get rid of all its nuclear weapons even if others would not.

Unilateralism as against multilateralism required the involvement of one nation or state whereas multilateralism and bilateralism required the involvement of more than three nations and two nations, respectively. Therefore, unilateralism in international politics refers to those actions of state which are being unilaterally done or carried out for the furtherance of her national interest or perceived national interest without the least consideration of, how other nations would perceive.

### **End of Cold War and the Emergence of Uni-Polar World**

Following the end of World War II in 1945, the world had been sharply divided into two hostile ideological camps – NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation), comprising of USA and its Western European allies and Soviet Union (USSR) and its Eastern European allies under Warsaw Pact. NATO, led by USA stood firmly for the protection, preservation and furtherance of democratic values and institutions with capitalist system of market economy, individual freedom etc. On the other hand, the Warsaw Pact, led by Soviet Union (USSR) stood firmly for the preservation and furtherance of communist ideology with state



control of all means of productions and distributions. The adoption of the two inherently opposing economic and political ideologies resulted in armament race under their respective leadership; USA and USSR. The two blocs, with the aim to protect and further their respective political ideology and economic interest, entered into a costly race for supremacy in armament procurement. This race of madness for procurement of the best kinds of weapons, including nuclear weapons with its delivery system, necessitated a sharp increase in defense spending which, naturally affect their economy in a big way. They particularly, Russia (USSR) began to feel the pang of this wasteful race for supremacy in armament procurement from the early part of 1980s. Soviet Union, because of this race of madness, started experiencing and encountering a sharp rise in inflation, un-employment, etc. Its heavy war machineries and weapon manufacturing industries, including nuclear weapons started depleting due to lack of proper maintenance which would cost huge national budget. On the other hand, USA and its West European allies could somehow, withstand the economic onslaught of this armament race. In the meantime, Soviet Union, not being able to bear the economic onslaught of the race for supremacy, succumbed to submission in 1992; marking the end of 45 years of Cold War. Soviet Union then broke up leading to the creation of Common Wealth of Independent States (CIS). The 45 years of Cold War was marked by the emergence of new states and the universalization of international system. The system was held in balance by global rivalry and equilibrium between the two super powers, USA and Soviet Union, until the disintegration of Soviet Union in 1992. The post Cold War period was, thus without a systematic equilibrium which is essential for the maintenance of international peace and stability. This resulted in the emergence of USA as the sole super power, thereby, paving the way for the emergence of US unilateralism.

### **Emergence of Uni-Polar World and the First Gulf War**

With the collapse of Soviet Union in 1991, the US became the lone super power leading to the emergence of uni-polar world. There remained no single power which could challenge the pre-ponderance power position of USA. China was by that time, a fast growing power, but not as yet, in a position to balance the power position of USA in the international system. It was at this crucial period of US dominance of international system that Iraq invaded its small oil rich neighbour, Kuwait. When Saddam Hussein, the Iraqi dictator invaded Kuwait in 1990, USA under the Bush administration got the opportunity to flex its muscle for liberating Kuwait. The Bush administration's foreign policy team forged an unprecedented international coalition consisting of its NATO Allies, Saudi Arabia, Syria and



Egypt to oppose Iraqi aggression. Even Russia, the long time ally of Iraq supported USA and condemned Iraq. The Department of State, started orchestrating diplomacy for this grand coalition's effective air campaign in January, 1991 which was followed by 'Operation Desert Storm' a 100 hour long ground war which culminated into the withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait.

The first Iraq War of 1991, thought was a UN mandated war to dislodge the invading Iraqi forces from Kuwait; it was not entirely initiated by UN. It was, however, the US initiated war, sanctioned by UN Security Council and was support by its NATO Allies, and some Middle-East countries. Though the war has its own perceived goal, preservation and protection of sovereignty and independence of nations, it obviously is an opportunity for US to show the world that it could pursue its national interest unilaterally, regardless of international support. Moreover, though the first Iraq War was the UN mandated war, it was fought under the direct command of US General which manifested that the war was more US war rather than UN war.

Liberation of Kuwait or the first Gulf War was a massive US led military operation with UN mandate to retake Kuwait from Iraq which it had invaded earlier on August 2, 1990. Kuwait's defense forces were quickly overwhelmed, and those who were not destroyed ran for their safety to Saudi Arabia. The Emir of Kuwait, his family and other government functionaries fled to Saudi Arabia, and within hours, not days, Kuwait city was captured. Soon after the fall of the city, the UN Security Council unanimously denounced the invasion and asked Iraq to immediately withdraw from Kuwait. On August 9, Operation Desert Shield started with the aim to defend Saudi Arabia from the possible Iraqi invasion. In the meantime, Saddam Hussein Iraqi dictator increased his occupying army in Kuwait to some 3,00,000 troops which was followed by the UN Security Council resolution authorizing the use of force against Iraq if it failed to withdraw its troops by January 15, 1991. As Iraq failed to withdraw its troops on the stipulated day, some 7,00,000 coalition troops, most of them Americans, gathered in Saudi Arabia and other Middle-East countries to dislodge Iraqi army from Kuwait. Exactly at 4:30pm EST on January 16, 1991, Operation Code name – Operation Desert Storm a massive US led offensive against Iraq began as the first batch of fighter aircrafts were launched from Saudi Arabia and off US and British aircraft carriers in the Persian Gulf. The Operation Desert Storm was launched under the supreme command of US General, Norman Schwarzkopf and the forces involved in the operation were drawn from 32 nations, including Britain, France, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. For six weeks, the US led coalitions massive and large scale air operation against Iraqi's military and civilian



infrastructure without much resistance from Iraqi air force or air defenses. The Iraqi ground forces were helpless in the absence of air support, and the only retaliatory measure was the launching of SCUD missile attacks against Saudi Arabia and Israel so as to provoke them.

The ground offensive of massive scale, which began on 24 February, rapidly overwhelmed the Iraqi's outdated and poorly equipped armed forces and within four days of ground offensive, Iraqi armed forces surrendered, retreated to Iraq or been destroyed. Kuwait was then finally liberated and retained its status as a sovereign independent nation. Following the liberation of Kuwait on February 28, George Bush, the then President of USA declared cease fire which was followed by UN Security Council resolution 687 accepting the cease fire declared by George Bush.

In the war, 148 American soldiers were killed and 457 were wounded. The other allied nations suffered some 100(combined) during the operation, Desert Storm. Though, there was no official report or confirmation on the exact figure of death and injured on Iraqi side, it is, however, believed that atleast 25,000 soldiers were killed and more than 75,000 were wounded, making it one of the most one sided military conflicts in the history of human civilization.

The preceding discourse on the course of the first Gulf War or Iraq War or more precisely the war for liberation of Kuwait, revealed that though the war was a UN mandated war, it is more a US war rather than UN war for liberation of Kuwait. The war was fought, as seen earlier not under UN command, but under the command of US General, Norman Schwarzkopf, and the cease fire, thereafter, the war was initiated and declared by US President, George Bush which was later accepted by UN Security Council. The terms and conditions laid down thereon were the creation, of USA under the Bush administration. The enforcement of the terms of cease-fire thereafter was carried out not by UN coalition, but was carried out by US and its closest ally, UK. Moreover, interms of troops contribution to the war, USA contributed 6,97,000 while the rest of UN coalition members, together contributed 2,70,630 which accounts for only 27.98 percent of the total troops engaged in the war. On the other hand, USA contributed 72 percent of the total troops engaged in the war. This in other words, means while USA contributed 72 percent of troops, a combine of 190 UN members state contributed only 28 percent. Though the war was fought with the aim to fulfill the principles and objectives of UN as enshrined in its charter, it was almost entirely US war. The fact is that most of the UN members are not fully obliged to fulfill their international obligation or are not fully committed to the cause of the war or it may also be that member state lacked the resources and man power. However, when it comes to a war for the



protection of national interest or territorial integrity; nations are committed to sacrifice almost everything. It is, therefore, to establish that the first Gulf War, though was a UN mandated war for liberation of Kuwait, was more like an act of US unilateralism in the context of the definition of what unilateralism is that 'unilateralism is a policy or practice of conducting foreign affairs with minimal consultation and cooperation with other nations, including a nation's allies' The first Gulf War, though was legitimized by an unequivocal resolution of the UN Security Council with no abstention, it was perfectly executed by the US and its allies who, together contributed minimal number of troops as compare to USA to the war. The success of the war, therefore, almost entirely rested on the commitment of USA to the fulfillment of the relevant UN Charter, and to the restoration of Kuwait's sovereignty and independence while at the same time, serving its foreign policy objective in the middle-east. Considering all these, it could be maintained that the first Gulf War, though was fought under the UN Security Council mandate, could loosely be considered as an act of US Unilateralism.

As discussed earlier, hostilities of 1991 Gulf War ended on February 28, 1991 with ceasefire negotiated between the UN coalition and Iraq. the US and its allies, particularly UK, with the objective of keeping Saddam Hussein in checked, declared "Operation Southern Watch" which was conducted by Joint Task Force (JTF-SWA) with the mission of monitoring and controlling airspace, south of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Parallel (extended to 33<sup>rd</sup> Parallel in 1996) as well as using economic sanctions. Pursuing a policy of containment towards Iraq, the UN under a strong pressure from US and UK imposed numerous economic sanctions which were enforced by US and UK. No fly-zone was unilaterally declared by US and UK with the aim to protect the Kurds in Iraqi Kurdistan, and Shia in the south from aerial attacks by Iraqi government; and also to ensure undisturbed inspection of the on-going inspection of the suspected sites of weapons of mass destruction (MND).

### **Resumption of Weapon Inspection and preparation for the war**

With the expulsion of UN weapon inspectors Iraq for accusing them of spying for USA in 1997, removing the Iraqi government, under Saddam Hussein, was made the official stand of USA. The USA, now wanted to effect regime change, and to that end in view, Iraq Liberation Act was passed and enacted by the Bush administration. This legislation of USA was in contrast with the terms set out in UN Security Council Resolution 687, which focused on weapons and weapon programmes, and made no mention of regime change. Hardly one month after the passing of the ACT (Iraq Liberation Act), the US and the UK started launching "Operation Desert Fox" and started bombarding campaign, the expressed aim of



which was, to hamper Iraq's ability to produce chemical, biological and nuclear weapons, while the aim behind the screen was, to weaken Saddam's grip on power.

In 2000, with the election of George W. Bush as the President of USA, USA adopted a more aggressive policy towards Iraq. However, there was no immediate formal movement towards an invasion of Iraq until September 11, World Trade Centre attack. In response to September 11 attack, Bush, the President of USA addressed a joint session of Congress and announced his new war on terror which was a unilateral declaration of war on terror authorizing preventive strike. Attempts were being made to establish a connection between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaida; and some officials of US Government asserted that a highly secretive connection existed between Saddam Hussein and Al-Qaida since 1992. The information, further asserted that there had been regular meetings involving Iraqi Intelligence Service and Al-Qaida since 1992.

There were differences of opinions among the policy makers and US think tank regarding the timing of the invasion with or without UN Security Council's authorization. While some favoured immediate invasion, some others advocated for seeking of UN Security Council's authorization. President, ultimately, decided building of a coalition under UN authorization, while reserving the option without it. The UN Security Council, after a lengthy debate on the issue, ultimately adopted a compromised "Resolution, Resolution 1441" which authorized the resumption of the stalled weapon inspection and promised serious consequences in case of non-compliance. France and Russia held that the words serious consequences do not necessarily include or imply the use of force in case of non-compliance. The US Ambassador to UN, Negroponte, and the UK Ambassador, Jeremy Greenstock, publicly confirmed this reading of the Resolution 1441, assuring that the Resolution provided 'no-automaticity' or hidden triggers for an invasion without further UN Security Council consultation. But the Resolution 1441 provided a real final opportunity for Iraq to comply with its disarmament obligations. Saddam Hussein, on 13 November, 2001 accepted the Resolution 1441 for resumption of weapon Inspection by Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Till February, 2003 the IAEA found no evidence or plausible indication of the revival of a nuclear program in Iraq. But, the UNMOVIC stated that it would take months to verify Iraq compliance with the relevant UN Security Council Resolution.



## **The US and UK were Determined to Invade Iraq**

In the meantime, however, the US Congress passed a resolution, Iraq Resolution which authorized the President to use any means necessary against Iraq. The President, in his State of the Union address in early 2003, said “we know that Iraq in late 1990s, had several mobile biological labs. On 5 February, 2003, US Secretary of State Colin Powell addressed the United Nations General Assembly, continuing his campaign for UN authorization for invasion of Iraq. Colin Powell, US Secretary of State, in the meantime, presented to the Security Council, a computer generated mobile biological weapon laboratory based on the claim of Rafid Ahmed Alawn Aljabi, code name ‘Curvelsa’ an Iraq emigrant living in Germany which he himself later admitted, was false and fabricated. Powell also presented evidence alleging that Iraq had ties with Al-Qaida, the main suspect of September 11 World Trade Centre attack. Following the presentation of Powell, the USA, UK Poland, Italy, Australian, Denmark, Japan and Spain proposed a resolution authorizing the use of force in Iraq, but NATO members like Canada, France and Germany, together with Russia strongly urged the continuation of diplomacy. The US, sensing the likely veto from France and Russia, eventually withdrew its proposed resolution.

The US was, however, determined to invade Iraq even without UN Security Council authorization. Along with some pro-war/pro-invasion countries of Europe like the UK, Portugal, Denmark, Spain and Australia, started war preparation. George W. Bush in his address to the nation demanded that Saddam Hussein and his two sons, Uday and Qusay should surrender within 48 hours. But, the US started its massive bombing campaign of Iraq before the expiry of the deadline.

After three weeks of intensive bombardment from the air, the US led coalition forces moved into Baghdad. On April 5, 2003 Task Force 1 – 64 Armour of the US Army 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division executed a raid which later was named ‘Thunder Run’ to test the remnant Iraqi defenses, with merely 29 tanks and 14 Badley armoured fighting vehicles, advancing to the Baghdad Airport which they secured after meeting heavy resistance. The following day, another brigade of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division attacked into downtown Baghdad and occupied the palaces of Saddam Hussein after a fierce battle. After the capture of Baghdad Airport and Saddam palaces, the US ordered Iraqi forces within Baghdad to surrender, else, the city would face full scale assault. All government officials and government functionaries disappeared and Iraq conceded defeat in the hands of US led coalition forces. On April 9, 2003 Baghdad was formally occupied by the coalition forces. Fighting, however, continued in other areas of Baghdad and its outskirts. Saddam had now, already disappeared and his



whereabouts was unknown. The US led coalition forces continued to attack Iraqi forces loyal to Saddam. However, on 12 April, 2003, all fighting finally ceased. The war, then finally came to an end and during the course of the war, a total of 34 Americans and 2320 Iraqi fighters were reported to have been killed.

The US led coalition troops continued the operation for searching key members of Saddam Hussein's government, the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division and personnel's from Task Force 20, on July 22 killed in a gun fight, Saddam's sons Uday and Qusay killed. One of Saddam's grandsons was also killed in the same gunfight. Saddam Hussein himself was captured on 13 December, 2003 by US Army, 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and members of Task Force 121 during the Operation Red Dawn. With the fall of Baghdad, President George W. Bush on May 1, 2003 officially announced the end of major combat operation in Iraq War. Clearly visible in the background where Bush announced the end of major combat was, a banner which read "Mission Accomplished."

The US led coalition of the willings as George Bush puts it, comprising of troops drawn from USA (1,50,000 to 2,50,000), the UK (56,000), Australia (20,000), Poland (2,500), Spain (1,300) and more than 30 other countries toppled the government and other important cities in only 21 days. The Iraqi Army, armed with old Soviet and Eastern European made armaments was incompitable to the American and British forces equiped with the best and the most modernized weapons. But what was important here is, not who wins or who loss, in the war or how many days or months it take to overthrow Saddam Hussein. What is more important here in our analysis of the war is, what is the objective of the war as per the relevant UN Security Council resolution or was there no any option other than war for achieving the goal of UN resolution which is "to disarm Iraq or prevent Iraq from developing any kind of weapons of mass destruction (MND) and to that end the Security Council passed a Resolution under 1441 for resumption of weapons inspection. Accordingly, weapons inspection was resumed, but no sufficient clue was established that proved Iraq was developing or trying to develop weapons of mass destruction. The inspection team, comprising of members from IAEA maintained that several months will be needed to fully verify that Iraq was complying with UN Resolution 1441, which promised 'serious consequences in case of failure to comply. The US, on its part, has its own agenda for going to war which include among others, to punish Saddam Hussein for having alleged link with Al-Qaida, the main suspect of September 11, World Trade Centre attack. Also, to have a regime change in Iraq which US unilaterally approved without consultation with the UN Security Council. According to General Tommy Frank, the objectives of Iraq invasion were:



- to end the regime of Saddam Hussein;
- to identify, isolate and eliminate Iraq weapons of mass destruction;
- to search for, to capture and to drive out terrorists from the country;
- to collect such intelligent information which could be connected to terrorist networks;
- to collect information's which could be related to the global network of illicit weapons of mass destruction;
- to end sanctions and to immediately deliver humanitarian support to the displaced and to many needy Iraqi citizens. To secure Iraqi oil fields and resources, which belong to the people of Iraq and
- to help the people of Iraq to create conditions for a transition to a representative self-government (democratize the political system).

### **The Second Gulf War: the US and UK acts of Unilateralism**

The above stated objectives of the invasion, with the exception of the second, i.e. to identify, isolate and eliminate Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, are all created by America unilaterally. The UN Security Council's resolution, 1441 which provides for serious consequences in case of Iraq's failure to comply, had been interpreted by US, as an automatic authorization for use of force which France, Russia and Germany refused to agree with. Sensing the probability of veto by Russia and France in the Security Council, USA unilaterally decided that it would invade Iraq with or without UN authorization. George W. Bush, the President of USA while visiting Europe for NATO Summit in November, 2002, declared, "should Iraq President, Saddam Hussein, chooses not to disarm, the US will lead a coalition of willings, to disarm him" President Bush, while declaring coalition of the willings, referred to those countries who supported, militarily or verbally, the military action in Iraq and subsequent military presence in Iraq.

As stated earlier, as far as the UN is concerned, the objective of the invasion was, to disarm Iraq of weapons of mass destruction. Even after more than a decade, there seems to be no evidence that Iraq was developing such weapons, and that the claim that Iraq was developing or trying to possess nuclear or chemical weapons was found to be baseless. It was the US which unilaterally, created other objectives of the invasion. The authorization for use of military force against Iraq was passed not by the UN Security Council, but was passed by the US Congress with Republican voting of 98% in favour in the Senate, and 97% in favour in the House. Democrats supported the resolution with 58% and 39% in the Senate and House, respectively. The resolution asserted the authorization by the Constitution of United



States and the Congress for the President to fight anti-United States Terrorism. Citing the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998, the resolution reiterated that it should be the policy of the United States to remove Saddam Hussein regime and promote a democratic replacement. The resolution authorized the President to use the Armed Forces of United States “as he determines to be necessary and appropriate” to “defend the national security of United States against the continuing threat posed by Iraq; and enforce all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq.

As has been seen in the preceding discussion on the first and second Gulf Wars, it would be rationale to conclude that while the first Gulf War was fought under UN Security Council mandate, the second Gulf War was fought without the Security Council’s authorization. But even in the case of the first, the war was fought under the command of US General, Norman, and not under UN Command. Moreover, the US has an overwhelming contribution, both in terms of man power and in terms of war machineries. The US alone contributed 72% of the total troops engaged in the war. It is, though not entirely the unilateral declaration of the war by USA, it certainly involved some elements of US unilateralism in the post cold war international system. The second Gulf War, on the other hand is entirely a different story. The invasion was not mandated by the UN Security Council resolution. The UN Security Council Resolution 1441 provides “serious consequences in case of Iraq’s failure to cooperate with weapons inspectors which, France Russia and Germany interpreted as not necessarily an authorization for use of force against Iraq. However, the US and UK were determined to invade Iraq anyway, and for justification of their planned invasion advanced a parallel legal argument using the earlier resolutions, which authorized the use of force in response to Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990. Under this reasoning, by failing to disarm and submit to weapon inspections, Iraq was in violation of UN Security Council resolution 660 and 678, and the US could legally compel Iraq’s compliance through military means.

It is, therefore, to be established that the second Iraq War or Gulf War, almost entirely was an act of US Unilateralism in the post Cold War international system. Soon after the end of Cold War following the disintegration of Soviet Union, there emerged a uni-polar world with unilateralism as the only surviving international system, wherein USA was the main player with no competitor for the time being. The UN Security Council, with no power within to contest and contradict US and its policy, became almost entirely the tool in the hands of US to further its national and foreign policy interest. Permanent members of UN Security Council, including Russia, restrained themselves from vetoing any US sponsored resolution.



Russia and France, were expected to exercise their veto power on the US led invasion of Iraq in 2003, but they instead of vetoing, abstained from voting in the Security Council. It is, therefore, to be maintained that the period between the collapse of Soviet Union and the Second Gulf War of 2003 was a period of Unilateralism. Balance of power, the international system during the Cold War was replaced by a period of unilateralism and preponderance power position of USA.

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